

Rodeo

When the latter part of June came around, the attention of us kids was always turned toward the rodeo grounds. While we played, we always kept one eye looking for the first semi truck that would be bringing the rodeo livestock. As soon as one of us saw it we would all run to the rodeo grounds to watch the stock being unloaded. That was fun, and the excitement in the air was intoxicating.

When it was rodeo time, we spent a lot of our time at the rodeo grounds hanging around the stock pens and playing wood tag on the fences and bleachers. I was always a little nervous around the bullpen. They were huge and I expected one of them to tear down the fence and get me.



Once Dallas and I were sitting on a tree branch that was hanging over where they were running the bulls past. All at once two of the bulls started fighting right under us. They were brawling and churning up the dust right below our feet. I was hanging onto the branch for dear life.

We got to know the clowns and people that performed in the specialty acts at the rodeo. We would watch the stock and watch the Taylor's. They were twin brothers who were clowns and worked as rodeo hands. They were fairly short, dark skinned and had dark hair all over them. We thought all those rodeo people were the neatest in the whole world. Wilbur Plogger and Chuck Henson



were two of the clowns that were our favorites.

Wilbur had a big doughnut (a large tire inner tube) that he would throw at the bulls. He could always get it to go over the bull's head. He also had a monkey that would ride a dog around the barrels. Another favorite of ours was Wick Peth. He was a real bullfighter, whose job was to save the cowboys and not entertain the crowd. He came along right after Wilbur retired or right about that time.

The specialty acts seemed to be a lot better when we were kids. They were more exciting and seemed to have a larger variety. Most of the acts seem to be all the same now. Rachel and Dallas saw Larry Clayman do his Roman Riding in the rodeo. He would Roman Ride (standing up with a foot on the back of each animal) two gray Brahma Bulls. They decided they were going to learn how to do that.



They practiced and practiced in the round corral and got so they were dang good on the Gray Horse while he was walking, and they could even do it while he was trotting, kind of. Scott and Clay would come out and call them *"Harry and Jerry and their Flying Ass."* Rachel and Dallas didn't let it bother them though. They knew that they were going to be rich and famous riding the rodeo circuit and be fabulous trick riders.

Larry Clayman had a son named Sam. He was around Dallas' and Rachel's age and they hung around with him while he was there for the rodeo. They felt pretty important hanging around with someone who was related to a celebrity. They even got to watch the rodeo from the stand up above the chutes one time. Sam was always getting into trouble and getting them into trouble. He came every year and they would just pick up their friendship where they left off the year before.

One time when they were playing with Sam, he showed them some black powder he had stolen from his dad. Sam dumped the black powder into a pile and was ready to strike a match. Dallas and Rachel told him that it probably wasn't a good idea but Sam assured them that it wasn't a big deal. Rachel and Dallas stood back at a safe distance while Sam set a match to it. WHOOSH!! The powder instantly went up in a cloud of smoke taking Sam's eyebrows with it. When they saw Sam later that day he had lotion all over his face because his face had been burned.

Watching the rodeo was always fun. We usually got to go to all three nights of the rodeo, and sometimes have a "Rodeo Hamburger" and even a can of soda pop. My favorite part was the bull riding and I always rooted for the bulls.

One year was particularly exciting. Thursday night at the rodeo was family night, and the place was always packed. Everything went smoothly until the bull riding. The first few bulls came and went without too much excitement, and then it was Senora Red's turn. This bull bucked off his rider and headed for the northeast corner of the arena. As usual on Thursday nights the bleachers were



packed and so were the isles.

That is until the bull jumped the fence.

To this day I don't know where those people went. The whole crowd in that corner just disappeared. The next night that corner of the arena wasn't quite as crowded, (I guess word got around), and there were about ten guys on horses blocking that corner of the arena, just in case.

After Senora Red bucked off his rider, he headed for the corner again. All the guys on horses roped him, but he still tried to jump the fence. With a mixture of all the ropes and a guy on the fence whipping him, they finally persuaded the bull to go back, but not before he broke the top of the fence. The bull jumped his last fence during a rodeo in another town and I think the last place I saw him was at McDonald's between a couple of hamburger buns.

Because the rodeo was so important to Dad, we would usually get a new set of clothes, and would get to go to the rodeo all three nights; but some years we weren't able to go to every performance. On the nights we didn't go, we would climb Grandma's tree north of the ditch. If we climbed all the way to the top, we could see most of the arena. We couldn't see the whole arena, just about the east half. We always prayed that the horses would buck all the way down there so we could see them.

Grandpa and Grandma Scott would let us kid's park cars in the field by their house during the rodeo. One time we looked down the street and saw the price that the neighbors were charging people to park in their yards. We made our sign for ten cents less, and the cars started pouring in. The people down the street lowered their price, so we just lowered our price again. We did this until our field was full.

Once Sterling and I were parking cars and we decided to let them park for free. Our field filled up in a flash, and some people were so grateful they actually gave us more money than we would have charged. We thought we had quite a racket going. Sterling and I made enough money letting cars park for free, that we were able to go to the last couple of nights of the rodeo and get a couple of hamburgers and drinks.

There was one part of the rodeo experience that I did not enjoy. After each performance the area under the bleachers was covered with empty cups, beer cans, paper bags, programs, etc. Because Dad was on the rodeo committee I was enlisted to help clean up the mess. Most of it wasn't too bad, but occasionally I would come across a dirty diaper or something. The worst part was that I had to give up some of my valuable play time to do it. I did get paid a little for it (25 cents or something like that) but it didn't seem worth it. Occasionally, I found some money that was dropped and it made me feel a little better.

Dad was a member of the Roping Club. Each of the members owned a steer that they kept at our house. On Saturdays they would get together at the rodeo grounds and hold team-roping jackpots. The men would each pay some money to compete and the winners would get the money minus any expenses. After they roped a steer someone had to take the ropes off of it. That's where the kids came into the picture.



Scott and Clay roping in our arena

My older brothers would take the rope off the steer's head and my job was to take the rope off the hind legs. If they roped both legs like they were supposed to it wasn't a problem because the rope would just fall off. But if they only roped one leg I had to go to work. I had to take a stout wire that had a hook on the end of it and pull the rope off the steer's heel. Rachel usually had to tie the string on the barrier. This was a line that was pulled across the opening where the "header" waited. The header's job was to rope the head of the steer while the healer's job was to rope the legs. Dad's roping buddies were an interesting lot. Many of them smoked and drank and used colorful language, but they were good guys. I learned that Marlboro cigarettes smelled much better than some of the other brands.

Once when I was quite young, I was at the High School Rodeo and Scott was competing in the calf and team roping. After he was done, he wanted me to ride his horse home. We lived about a quarter of a mile from the rodeo grounds,



The barrel horse saddled up

so it wasn't a big deal, but the horse he was using was ornery and must have been a little homesick. When the horse was led away from home, you had to fight it most of the way; but when you turned it for home, there was no stopping it. Scott threw me on the saddle and handed

me his ropes. Once I left the rodeo grounds and turned the corner by the Riding Club towards home the horse took off. I was so little my feet didn't reach the stirrups so it was a little hard for me to stay on the horse. I had one hand on the saddle horn with a white knuckle grip, and the other hand was desperately trying to hang on to the ropes. I lost my grip on the ropes and they were trailing behind me dragging on the road while I was hanging on for dear life. I was pretty mad at the horse while I was unsaddling it at home.

Another time I was riding behind one of my brothers and he decided to go through the ditch near my Grandma Scott's house. The ditch was about four feet deep and the banks were quite steep. The horse took its time going into the ditch but it lunged up the other side. I was always amazed at how much power a horse has. When the horse lunged



Our roping steer

up the other side, it lunged right out from under me and I was left dangling over the hind end of the horse with a death grip on the back of the saddle. We also had a horse that loved to rear up on its hind legs. Scott was masterful in getting it to do it. One time Scott was heading out to Grandpa Anderson's farm with Rachel riding along behind him. They were enjoying the beautiful day, when Scott decided to "rear" the horse. Unfortunately for Rachel, he didn't inform her of his intentions, and she slid right off the back of the horse, landing on her



behind. The wind was knocked out of her so she couldn't make a sound to let Scott know that he was minus a passenger. It took him a little while before he noticed that Rachel was gone.

Scott, Clayton, and Dallas spent a lot of time practicing roping. They had various contraptions to help them, such as a wooden steer that had horns and moving legs so one of them could "head" it (rope the horns) and the other could "heel" it (rope the hind legs). They even had a wooden calf so they could practice tying the legs.

The boys' calf roping aids

They had barrels set up on stands the height of a horse so they could put a saddle on it and practice roping. They also had what we called the “whirly gig.” It had a barrel with some steer legs made from wood bolted onto it. The barrel was on a long pipe with a counter weight on the other side. The whole thing pivoted around in a circle. The purpose of it was to practice heeling for team roping. While the thing was turning, they would ride in on their horse and rope the wooden legs. The only problem was getting the thing turning. That’s where I came in. At first I did it for free, but later on it cost them a dime. I spent a lot of time pushing that thing.

When they were not using the roping aids to practice on, they were usually roping a bale of hay. After this became boring, they would start having contests. This usually involved spinning the rope back and forth and around their back like a trick roper before they roped the bale of hay.

One evening, Scott and Clayton got home from the Riverton rodeo, having won the team roping. Scott had also won the calf roping and the all-around trophy. Dad was real excited and woke everyone up. We went into the kitchen, and all the huge belt buckles and trophies that they won were on the table. This was the first rodeo that Dad went to where Scott and Clay were competing in, and he was so proud he had tears running down his cheeks. The boys also won big at the Lehi High School Rodeo. Scott and Clay ended up winning saddles along with many belt buckles.



Clay, Dad and Dallas - with Clay's saddle

A few months after Mom died, Scott and Neil College were able to go to Bozeman, Montana to team rope in the College National Finals Rodeo. They ended up 13th in the nation. While they were there, they didn't have much money for food.

The school gave them money for gas but they gave it to Uncle Melvin because he hauled them there in his truck and trailer. They just had a little change to buy food with, so they got some bales of hay and had some roping contests with the other contestants. That's how they won enough money to buy some bread and stuff to make bologna sandwiches; which is what they lived on while there.

Dad was a member of the Lehi Civic Improvement Association serving on the Lehi Roundup Rodeo Committee for many years. He designed the roping chutes so they were very efficient. Most of us kids helped out during the Lehi Roundup celebration in various capacities. We helped in building, riding in and pulling floats, working in the concession stands, and when we got older helping with the rodeo.

Dad was put in charge of the roping chutes during the Roundup Rodeo. He and his boys ran the roping chutes for over 20 years. Cotton Rosser, who was the owner of the Flying U Rodeo, said that the Lehi rodeo was the only rodeo where the cowboys didn't have to wait on the workers running the roping chutes. We worked there until after Dad died in 2010.



Dallas, Lee, Scott, Clay, Dad, and Cody